

ECCLESIASTICAL MATERIALISM

by Most Reverend Donald J. Sanborn

Introduction. From the title, one might expect that I would be writing about avarice among the clergy. I am not addressing that at all, however.

Recently I received from an old friend, who is a Novus Ordo conservative, a note in which he invited me to come back “to Rome — and the true Church — outside of which there is no salvation.”

His invitation, although made with all good intentions, nevertheless prompted me to write this response. What he means is that I should give up my repudiation of Vatican II and its subsequent reforms, submit to the local bishop, and be somehow “regularized” within the structures of the Novus Ordo.

First response. My first response is the following. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that there is one true Church of Christ, and only one, which is the Roman Catholic Church. The Novus Ordo teaches that the Church of Christ merely “subsists in” the Catholic Church. (*Lumen Gentium*) The Roman Catholic Church teaches that outside of the Roman Catholic Church there is no salvation. The Novus Ordo teaches that outside the Roman Catholic Church there *is* salvation, namely that non-Catholic religions are means of salvation. (*Decree on Ecumenism, Catechesi Tradendæ* of John Paul II) The Roman Catholic Church condemns religious liberty. The Novus Ordo teaches religious liberty. (*Decree on Religious Liberty*) The Roman Catholic Church condemns the idea that the college of bishops has supreme jurisdiction over the whole Church. The Novus Ordo teaches this condemned doctrine, known as collegiality. (*Lumen Gentium*) The Roman Catholic Church condemns adultery and fornication in all cases. The Novus Ordo teaches that these are morally acceptable in certain cases. (*Amoris Lætitia*) The

Roman Catholic Church condemns as a mortal sin of sacrilege the giving the Holy Eucharist to non-Catholics. The Novus Ordo approves of it. (*1983 Code of Canon Law*) The Roman Catholic Church condemns the use of birth control devices as mortally sinful and intrinsically evil. The Novus Ordo permits birth control devices for prostitutes. (*Ratzinger, “Benedict XVI,”* in a published interview)

What I have responded above is only a smattering of the myriad dogmatic, moral, liturgical, and disciplinary contradictions between the Roman Catholic Church and what we call the Novus Ordo. We could provide the endless list of heresies and blasphemies of Bergoglio. But these things are well known.

The four marks of the Church. I will add to this first response the four marks of the Church. (1) The Roman Catholic Church is one in faith, that is, in order to be Catholic all must profess the same dogmatic and moral teachings which are taught by the Roman Catholic Church. The Novus Ordo has no unity of faith, and as we have seen, has no continuity with the Catholic past in any of the essential aspects of the Church’s unity. (2) The Roman Catholic Church is catholic, that is, universal, since it preaches a single doctrine to the whole world. Since the Novus Ordo lacks unity in doctrine, and lacks continuity with the Church’s past in matters of doctrine, it cannot have the mark of catholicity. For catholicity presupposes unity. (3) The Roman Catholic Church is holy. The Novus Ordo is unholy, because it condones evil disciplines, preaches condemned doctrines and heresies, leads people into error and sin, and promotes the evil New Mass, promotes abominable ecumenical acts with non-Catholic religions, and condones sacrilegious liturgical practices. (4) The Roman

Catholic Church is apostolic. The Novus Ordo has abandoned apostolic doctrine and discipline, and teaches and does what is contrary to this sacred apostolic deposit.

Come back to what? My friend's invitation makes it sound as if the Catholic religion is intact in the institutions he wants me to embrace. It is as if it is the year 1950, and that I have wandered off into schism because of my pride. If this were true, I would return immediately. But there is an elephant in the room. The elephant is this: The Novus Ordo is innovation, is heresy, is alien to the religion revealed by God and taught by the Roman Catholic Church. It is as much a break with the past as the heresy of Martin Luther was.

What is different, however, between Martin Luther and the Novus Ordo? There is this significant difference: *Martin Luther was excommunicated and subsequently founded his own church. The Novus Ordites have never been excommunicated, and have never founded their own church.* This difference is the key to understanding the present problems in the Catholic Church.

Ecclesiastical materialism. Now I will explain ecclesiastical materialism. The Roman Catholic Church has a visible aspect and an invisible aspect. What is visible is the external profession of faith, the administration of the sacraments, and the visible government. What is invisible is the grace and assistance of the Holy Ghost which infuses the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the authority to govern, and the indelible character on the soul in Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. The Holy Ghost, furthermore, assists the Church by an invisible influence in its promulgation of doctrine, morals, liturgy, and discipline, in such a way that these things are free from error. It is this invisible assistance which guarantees the infallibility and indefectibility of the Church.

All of these qualities are invisible, but are nonetheless what make the Catholic Church the one, true Church of Jesus Christ, outside of which there is no salvation. These invisible qualities have made the Catholic Church for two thousand years the unchanging, permanent, always consistent and

coherent institution of divine truth in a sinful, ignorant, and ever-fluctuating world.

Even the administration of the sacraments has an external and internal aspect. The external aspect is the visible rite itself. The internal aspect is the validity of the sacrament, whereby it confers the grace it signifies. It is therefore possible that the external rite be observed and administered, even though, through some internal and invisible defect, the sacrament is not valid.

In our discussion here, we are saying that what is left of the authority of the Church in the Novus Ordo is merely the *material* or *visible* aspect of authority, that is, persons designated to receive authority. What is lacking to them is the divine authority, and the divine assistance which necessarily accompanies it.

Body and soul. Just as the soul is the life of the body, so it is authority which gives life, so to speak, to the person who is designated to be pope or bishop. It is to say that a mere election or appointment is not sufficient. The authority must come to him from Christ, the Invisible Head of the Church, in order that he be a true pope or a true bishop. This authority is transferred only on condition that the designated person have the intention of promoting the objective and proper ends of the institution over which he is placed. It is for this reason that the president-elect of the United States does not obtain power in November when he is merely elected, but in January when he is inaugurated, and only on condition of *swearing* to uphold the Constitution of the United States. He must swear that he intends to lead the country to its objective and proper ends. Were he to fail to so swear, he would fail to obtain the power, and would remain a president-elect, a president only *materially*, until such time as the Congress removed the election from him.

What has happened to the Church since 1958. What we are facing in the Novus Ordo is this: Modernists, by remaining secretive for decades, managed to obtain by the normal and legal process of appointment and designation, a position in the Church to which authority is normally connected. So John XXIII was elected pope in 1958. By a defect, however, the authority, which is invisible and which is given by

Christ the Head of the Church, was never transferred to John XXIII and his successors. What was this defect? It is that they intended to pervert the Church, and to lead it in a direction contrary to its nature and purpose given to it by God. In a word, they wanted to transform the structures and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church into a huge vehicle of their Modernism. This evil intention is what has blocked the flow of authority from Christ into them. Without this authority they remain non-popes, false popes. The bishops who have embraced this perversion of Catholicism are also false bishops for the same reason.

That the authority of Christ and the assistance of the Holy Ghost are lacking can be seen from the Hiroshima effect of Vatican II. The Novus Ordo religion — essentially Modernism — has wrecked all of the institutions of the Catholic Church. What is left is only a lifeless shell of these institutions. There are the same physical buildings. There are the same institutions of government. There is still a functioning Vatican. There is still a diocesan bishop. There is still a chancery. There are pastors appointed. There are functioning parishes. There are rectors of seminaries, the few that are left.

What we are seeing here, however, is merely a carcass of the Church's authority. It is something like a dead whale which has washed up on the shore. These institutions, both the buildings and the government, constitute, from a purely material and visible point a view, a continuity with the past. Internally and invisibly, however, they are full of doctrinal, moral, liturgical, and disciplinary corruption. The stench of death rises from them, that is, the stench of heresy and all of its effects. Everything is infected with gangrene: the Mass, the rites of the sacraments, the catechism, doctrine, morals, attitudes. We see the effects of this infection, as well, in the emptying of the seminaries, convents and religious houses of all kinds, in the breathtaking decline of religious belief and practice, especially among the young, in the nauseating and disgusting conduct of the clergy, even to the point of sodomitic orgies in the Vatican, enhanced with both drugs and liquor, which recently took place, and was reported in the major newspapers, e.g., the *London Times*.

The Novus Ordo popes, consequently, are mere “cadavers” of real popes, inasmuch as they sit in the chair of Peter, wear the uniform of a pope, but have no power from Christ to teach, rule and sanctify in His name.

My second response. My second response, therefore, is that the Novus Ordo conservatives are *ecclesiastical materialists*. They can see only the continuity of lifeless institutions from pre- to post-Vatican II, and from that they conclude that salvation consists in adhering to these lifeless institutions. They see only the material side of the Church, its visible side, and turn a blind eye to the absence of the invisibles of the Church, especially the assistance of the Holy Ghost in keeping the Church free from error and defection.

The Novus Ordo religion is one big error and defection. The fact that error and defection can be found in it is an infallible sign that the invisible assistance of the Holy Ghost is not with the Modernist “popes” and “bishops.” They have no authority to rule, no matter if they are maintaining the buildings and governmental institutions of the Church.

An analogy. To illustrate my point, I will make an analogy to a hijacked airplane. Imagine a scene in which terrorists, who have come through the ranks of the airline as uniformed, licensed, and authorized pilots, one day show their true colors by announcing that the airplane will be flown into the side of a building. They slit the throats of anyone who tries to stop them.

From the outside, the plane is flying as normal. Inside there is chaos, terror, and horror.

The Novus Ordo conservative could be compared to the passenger who would say: “For as long as we are still flying, and the pilots are authorized and uniformed pilots, and the airline logo is still on the plane, there is nothing to fear.”

The sedevacantists are those who have done something to stop the evil pilots, and who have had the common sense to declare that if the pilots intend the ruination of the aircraft and its passengers, *they do not have the authority to pilot the plane*. These

sedevacantists are considered “extreme” and “misled” by the passengers who are consoled — indeed blinded — by the purely external signs of the normal functioning of the plane. These are the Novus Ordo conservatives.

A carcass of authority. The Novus Ordo conservative looks merely at the carcass of authority and government, which is really the *only* thing left intact since Vatican II, and from it concludes to the identity of the pre- and post-Vatican II religion. He fails to understand that if the invisible qualities of the Church do not vivify the visible institutions of the Church, then these institutions are dead in the practical order.

The Catholic Church, as the Church founded by Christ and assisted by the Spirit of Truth, always retains these institutions of the papacy and episcopacy and her faithful are always attached to them. Therefore in this present hijacking of these institutions, the Church does not lose her power to teach, to rule, and to sanctify, for these pertain to her divine constitution. Just as the solution to the hijacked airline is to wrest the control of the aircraft from those who would pervert its function and destination, so the solution for the Church is to wrest control of these sacred institutions from the Modernists so that once again the government of the Church may function normally.

In order to wrest control, however, it is first necessary to identify the hijacker and to proclaim what is common sense: that he who intends the destruction of the aircraft and its passengers does not have the authority to pilot the aircraft. Likewise the Modernist, though sitting in a papal or episcopal throne, does not have the authority to pilot the Church.

The worst thing anyone could do in such a case is to reassure Catholics that because we find these Modernists sitting in the papal throne or episcopal throne, then for that reason they must have the authority to rule the Church. It is as absurd as to say that because the hijacking pilots are seated in the cockpit, they have the authority to pilot the plane and we must obey them.

The Novus Ordo conservative, in remaining loyal to the Modernist “authorities,” stymies and paralyzes a proper and efficacious reaction to the problem in the Church. He invites everyone to rally to the Modernists, and to spurn and condemn the sedevacantists as schismatics. If the four Novus Ordo cardinals who presented the *Dubia* to Francis had the courage to declare him a non-pope, for reason of heresy, the Catholic Church would be on the road to recovery. Instead, they were careful to tell Francis that they were not sedevacantists. Cardinal Burke, one of the *Dubia* cardinals, stated in an interview in December that if Francis were a public heretic, he would no longer be the pope.

Leave Rome? Who has left Rome? It is not to leave Rome, the one true Church, to be faithful to Catholic doctrine, liturgy and discipline. It is not to leave Rome to denounce as Modernism, the worst heresy to assail the Church according to Saint Pius X, the aberrations of Vatican II in doctrine, liturgy, and discipline. It is not to leave Rome to declare that those who deviate from the true faith cannot rule the Catholic Church.

It is to leave Rome, however, to embrace the new religion of Vatican II, and to associate with the authority of Christ those who have devastated, in a matter of fifty-nine years, counting from 1958, the magnificent Catholic Church, built up for centuries by true popes and bishops with the assistance of the Spirit of Truth. For Rome is the Church, and the Church is the Faith.

All of these discussions always revert to a single question: Do the reforms of Vatican II constitute a new religion, different from the Catholic religion? If they do, then the position of the sedevacantists is correct. For it is impossible that the Church, assisted by the Holy Ghost, could promulgate to the whole world a false religion. If, on the other hand, they do not constitute a new religion, if indeed there is continuity of true doctrine, liturgy and discipline, then the sedevacantist is wrong and the Novus Ordo conservative is right. So it is pointless to talk about anything else unless this single burning question is answered.